

Baby Birds

By Celeste Silling

Spring is in full swing now, with plants in bloom, warmer temperatures, and birds making nests. But with more bird nests always comes more baby birds on the ground.

On a spring day here at Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, it isn't unusual for us to get a call from a concerned citizen who has found a baby bird on the ground and is wondering what to do. We aren't a wildlife rehab, but we are happy to share some tips on how to care for these birds if you find them.

When you find a baby bird out of its nest, the first thing you want to do is take a look at its general condition. If it's injured or covered with ants, its going to need your help. But if it doesn't look injured, it might be fine. In fact, most baby birds are still being cared for by a parent even if they are on the ground. Chicks often leave the nest before they can fly because it's safer for them on the ground where they can run and hide from predators.

If your baby bird is feathered all over, it is likely a fledgling that has left the nest on purpose. You can leave the fledglings alone, as they are likely fine. If you want to make sure, you can watch from afar to see if the parent bird comes back to feed its baby.

However, if you find a baby that is not feathered, it might need some help. If you can find the nest and safely reach it, try putting the baby back in the nest. Don't worry about getting your scent on the chick; it is not true that parent birds will reject a baby if a human has touched it. Usually, the parent will be watching somewhere nearby and will return to the nest once the baby is back in.

If you can't reach the nest or the baby is injured in some way, you'll need to call a wildlife rescue. If live here in Brazoria County, you can look up Gulf Coast Wildlife Rescue, who do great work in helping our local wildlife. If you live somewhere else, you can look up your nearest rescue online. I recommend the Texas Parks and Wildlife "Wildlife Rehabilitators County List" which is organized by county.

The rehab will likely instruct you to place the bird in a small box lined with paper towels. You should put the box somewhere safe and quiet with the lid closed. Do not give the bird any water or food unless instructed to by a rehabilitator! Then you can drive your patient to the rescue.

The best way to help chicks is to keep your cats indoors during the springtime. A bird on the ground is no match for a cat, especially if it can't fly! You can also put out dried meal worms and watch as the parents bring them to their babies. If you want to help in other ways, wildlife rehabilitators are always looking for volunteers and of course any donations are always appreciated!

Photos by Jackie Hicks

Caption: A baby Eastern Blue Bird with feathers coming in.



